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DESTINY

By ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY

Old Bassett had worked as janitor in the office for nineteen years. Many things had happened in that time, but nothing so strange as this placing of the fish in the office windows. Beautiful, radiant fish, swimming slowly back and forth in their great glass tanks.

The Company ran a line of steamers to the Islands. That is why some one had thought of putting the fish in the windows on the street. The fish were like a symbol. Anyone who had been to Honolulu would remember them. And even to others they would suggest the tropics. For these Hawaiian fish are as radiant as the birds of other tropic lands. They are colored like butterflies. They bring the warmth of the south to distant gray city streets. They lead the mind to thought of travel—to thoughts of pleasant waters that break in slow waves on far-off beaches.

In the windows the fish soon caught the attention of passers-by. It was good advertising. People stood on the sidewalk there to watch the fishes swimming.

The innovation was welcome to the office. For in the office all days are pretty much alike, beginning with Monday, working through to Saturday, and then beginning all over again. Anything that makes one day different from another is welcome. And from their desks along the wide expanse of shining floor, every one could watch the fish swimming in the window.

Old Bassett added his chuckles and his comment to the general amused interest. It did not at once occur to him

that a few fish swimming in tanks in the windows could add anything to his tasks.

Then, within a few days, one of the fish died. Bassett was called upon to remove it from the tank. He was told that this would henceforth be considered a part of his duties. For the fish would continue to die. Though the tanks were fitted with all manner of devices for warming the sea-water, constantly renewing it, keeping it fresh and clean and pure, still the fish would not live long in this captivity. One of the steamers that came up from the Islands would bring each month a fresh supply of fish. Meanwhile, Bassett was to watch the tanks, to remove the dead fish promptly. No ideas of death should be allowed to intrude upon the popular dream of voluptuous tropical life.

The old man began to grumble. He always resented added tasks, and here was a task that was particularly disagreeable. He went shuffling about the office with an expression of protest in his pale and watery eyes. He leaned over the desks to mutter to any one who would listen, "What do you think now? I've got to be always watching them tanks for dead fish! How'll I get my work done?"

The clerks openly laughed at him. They began to make jokes about his task. The more they teased him and laughed at him, the more reconciled the old man became to what he had to do. It was good to have the young people noticing him again. For a long time they had scarcely spoken to him as he went by. He might have been a mere inanimate part of the office equipment. But now he had a new place in their interest; and he devised endless complaints, to provoke their laughter, long after the new task had wholly ceased to be irksome.

Curting, the office wag, got a good deal of fun out of the situation. He called Bassett the "fish undertaker." He advised the old man to give each fish a thorough examination every morning, taking its pulse and its tempera-

ture, so as to know if any fatalities were likely to occur during the day. He would send a special message for Bassett to come to him and then, raising his voice so that Miss Murdock, at the next desk, might hear, he would ask gravely what progress was being made in the art of embalming.

The first week only one fish died. The next week there were three to die; and in the following weeks, constantly more and more. Then the steamer came in again and brought a fresh population to the tanks—and almost at once the ranks of the newcomers began to be depleted.

Old Bassett took to grumbling again. It wasn't the task he resented now, but the unreasonableness of the whole procedure. What was the sense in it all? He went with this query to Mr. Horton. Mr. Horton often remained serious when all the others were laughing at some trivial joke, and perhaps he would understand! Bassett bent impressively far above his desk. "These fish now . . . I can't see what they want to keep bringing 'em here to die for! Scooping 'em up out of the sea and bringing 'em here to die! Do they suppose anybody's going to buy a ticket to the Islands just because he looks in the window and sees those fish?"

Mr. Horton just shook his head slowly without looking up. "The ways of advertising are mysterious to behold," he suggested.

The old man hobbled to another desk.

"Can you tell me what they're doing it for?" he demanded.

"To give you a chance to earn your money," young Whipple told him shortly. Bassett swallowed twice, indignantly, and was beginning to explain all over again that he was the busiest person in the office; but the young man gave his arm a fling. "Get away now. I've got something to do."

Bassett went shaking his head past Curting's desk. Perhaps it was because Miss Murdock was there, taking a letter, that Curting called him over.

"I was thinking this morning, Bassett," he said, "that you're just like God."

Miss Murdock giggled appreciatively.

Curting leaned back in his chair. "You see, you've got your little world there, and you put your fish in, and you watch the poor devils swim around a while, and then, when they've had enough, you drag 'em out again."

Old Bassett went shuffling away, muttering, while Miss Murdock told Curting delightedly that he was getting worse all the time.

Bassett was muttering, "The young fool!" But he kept thinking about what Curting had said. Anything that concerned those fish stuck painfully in his mind. He was never allowed to forget them. There were always new ways of thinking about them. Curting's joke sent him back again and again to the tanks that day, to lean above them with a new puzzled regard for the fish that swam slowly back and forth, back and forth, from the clump of coral at one end to the fluttering strands of seaweed at the other.

His ideas of God were vague. He had long since ceased frequenting churches that referred to sorrow and suffering as God's gift to man, to strengthen his soul. Bassett had suffered abundantly in his long life, but he couldn't see that his soul was any the better for it. Since his youth he had given up thinking about his soul. It was all he could do to look out for his body. His soul must take its chances.

Life was a mighty queer sort of affair: that was the sum of Bassett's philosophy. Take these fish now — swimming free and wide in their warm waters and then caught up to live their last limited days in a space ten feet long, two feet wide, and four feet deep, surrounded by a substance that looked like water, but was hard and unyielding. Bassett remembered the years when *he* had swum wide and free in the waters of life — years so far back as to have the color of legend. And now here were

the goings and comings of his life bounded by the office and his musty Howard Street rooming-house — his coral clump and his strands of sea-weed.

He spoke of this to Curting. "It's like that with all of us," Curting said, "and then some day the Hand dips down and pulls us out of the tank." And Curting laughed.

Old Bassett spent more and more time leaning over the tanks, watching the swimmers with a new concern. He wondered if God bent above the world this way, thinking, "There's that fellow in the corner. He looks about done."

He would forget everything else in his contemplation of the measured swimming of the fishes. Then, when he came to himself with a start, he would hurry to one of the nearest desks and bend over it to mutter anxiously, "I wonder what they think about."

"Who, Bassett?"

"The fish."

"Oh, you and your fish! You're getting dippy on that subject!"

Perhaps he was. He certainly thought about very little else. And his ritual in disposing of the dead fish was developing into something that would have brought wild laughter upon him, if the office had known. At first, he had tossed them disgustedly into the garbage can. What could be less worthy of respect than a dead fish? But now he dealt with them tenderly. He wrapped several layers of paper around the flaccid bodies, first a sheet of soft paper and then a sheet of heavier paper; sometimes there would be a little cardboard box as a final protection against the contamination of the garbage can. One day, old Bassett found himself wishing that the cement-floored courtyard were an expanse of earth; then he could lay these swathed bodies beneath it at night and no one would ever know.

When the steamer came each month with another sup-

ply of fish, Bassett's indignation flared up afresh. These new swimmers seemed to him full of hope and vigor. And he knew that in a few weeks he would be dipping down his hand for their floating, lifeless bodies. If this was being like God, he didn't envy God his job.

More and more he went from desk to desk talking of the fish. The clerks did not laugh at him so much any more. Some of the men, as soon as he came near, burst out, "For God's sake, now Bassett, don't say *fish*!" Even Curting seemed to have drained the situation of its humor for him. The women listened to Bassett more patiently, but even they failed wholly to grasp his sense of the significance of the matter.

One day when Bassett was in the inner office, the manager said to him, "By the way, Bassett, I'll have to ask you not to talk so much to the clerks, while you're going about among the desks. It disturbs them."

"It's them fish, sir," Bassett explained.

"What have the fish got to do with it?"

"They're on my mind, like."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes, sir."

But as soon as he was back in the outer office, Bassett hurried to the first desk and bent over it to say, "Here I been nineteen years in the office, and the boss telling me I musn't talk. . . . Wants me to go around saying nothing like them poor fish."

The fancy pleased him. He went on to the next desk. "Don't expect me to say anything to you any more. I'm just a fish."

"You're a poor fish, all right," one of the boys jeered as he passed by.

"Yes; I'm a poor fish," Bassett agreed, with something like satisfaction.

When this had gone on for a few days, Curting called the old man to him. "I wouldn't let the joke go too far, Bassett. I don't think the boss likes it."

Bassett grumbled something about his human right to speech.

"But you know," Curting warned him, "the boss is the fellow around here who can dip down and pull any of us out of *this* tank."

Here was something for Bassett to add to his grievance. "They're just about ready to pull me out of the tank," he went about mumbling. "I been here nineteen years, but I'm getting old and useless now. I'm beginning to swim slow, and some evening they'll dip me out and throw me away somewhere."

He was called into the inner office and definitely warned that he must give more time to his neglected duties and less time to unnecessary talk, or he would have to be let go. The next day he did nothing but hang lovingly over the tanks. The fish were beautiful. Their slow swimming fascinated him. Back and forth they swam, back and forth. They came to the surface and lifted their lips above the water. They dove downward with a flick of their fins. They were beautiful. And Bassett knew that they were going to die. This was his little world and he foresaw what must happen in it. When he turned from the tanks to the desks, he felt compelled to speak to everyone of the horror of this fore-vision.

He had to be let go. He was worse than useless in the office. The manager dismissed him as kindly as possible. He asked Bassett about his means of support.

"Don't worry about me," the old man told him. "My days of swimming around the tank are just about over."

When he was gone the manager said to his secretary, "It's a relief to get rid of him. The old chap's a bit touched."

ANNIVERSARY

By HARRIET MAXON THAYER

Again he didn't understand her quite,
Because of that familiar way she had
Of skipping half a dozen steps or so
In literal argument, arriving so
At what, to her perhaps, seemed logical
As any nose on face.

“But I can't leap
From one peak to another with” — he smiled —
“No bridgeways nor safe valleys in between.”
She shut her basket — dusk was coming on —
Then said: “Well, what I meant was nothing more
Than women are revolving when they say,
'I wonder what another dozen years
Will do to me.' — I should have said that they
Were thinking of the past and what it's done
Already.” — Her eyes deepened. — “Seven years!
It doesn't sound as though it meant so long!”

“A stretch of misery?” he asked her. “Well,
I'd say we'd far from plumbed the agony
That people *might*. We've poverty — but health.”

“And — loneliness,” she added, and was still. . . .

He cluttered in his pocket for a knife
To cut away the shaggy bit of leather
That always ravelled from the outer sole.
“It isn't,” he replied, “as though we lived
Apart entirely. There's our neighbor's home;
And — since they're partners too — and kindly folks — ”

“It wouldn't make things different,” she said,
And hesitated — “I can't help the thought —
That they have kept us poor.”

He shook his head.

"It's just ourselves," he told her. "You forget
How good the venture looked to us when I
Was none too strong for city work. Beyond
Our woods, good fields for grazing — with some chap
To pay the start — it didn't look so bad."
He watched her as she moved about the room
Putting the children's chairs against the wall,
Piling them with unanimated toys,
And, when she sank beside him on a stool —
"Yes," he admitted, "loneliness of course, —
If that's so bad."

It might have shamed her once.
Now, if there were rebuke, she could ignore it.
"One needs to grow," she said, "to rub, to strive —"
"Well, we've had strife —"

"One needs
Like any caged-in cat to scratch its claws
On bark, lest they should take to growing long
And all too useless —"

"There are thoughts," he said.

She nodded. It was not her cue to add
How many hopeful, weary ones had plunged
Their headlong, devastating way with her.
"And there are trees," he added thoughtfully.

But she knew that, for he'd been watching them.
"Oh, yes," she answered, "we have this immense,
Stained-glass magnificence of autumn woods
Above a leaden river . . . Oh, I know
Its waters once were misted in the gold
Of summer noons — and it will hold again
The white, prismatic wine of early spring;
And even now, before the snow, it makes
A symphony of wrestling with the shore,
A resonance of mingling with the pines
That hold their arms like harps against the wind —

Faint harps, my dear, which, though their myriad strings
Strike harmony about your heart, are strung
To all too scanty range. . . . And I know, too,
About this little hedged-in space of life
That's all we have in which to know and live,
That's all for love, for children, — all to see
A millionth part of what is spread for us
By a too-lordly nature! And I think
One could love this no less if, with it all,
One loved the many colored crowds, and felt
That longing for the sea the river seeks
So unremittingly itself. To work, to laugh,
And, with the passing throng, to take
The bitter with the sweetness of their smile,
Might make the love for sky and cloudy river
More keen — ”

“It's not a thing to prove,” he said;
“And so seems hardly worth the while to state
At all.”

“Prove, *prove!*” she cried aloud, “and when
Has anything been settled by a proof?”

“Why, about everything that's known at all
For certainty!”

“Certainty!” she mocked.

“Yes, certainty,” he answered with a nod;
And his deep eyes re-focussed on a corner
Of that small indoor room they used for work
And children's playing, that could still be free
To let the wind and sun and rain and mist
Of those cold highlands in — and let the stars,
That comforted at night, look in to guard
Where little else was guarding, and so be
Some measure of security for her,
Who had at least her spirit's safe-guard with them,
If nothing else. . . . And they were coming now,

Dimly like dipping lanterns from lost ships
 Returning soundless, rhythmic with dull sleep
 And drowsy half-sleep that would once again
 Spell its unuttered runes to outwit pain.
 She turned bright eyes beneath a tawny crown
 Of back-brushed hair, "Well, take them then,"
 She charged him, "— take the stars."

And, when his eyes

Steadied against her own, they seemed to her
 To be immersed in star-dust and not her,
 The while he answered, "And I've often thought
 I'd like to." This was what he said.
 But she knew she would have to wait to know
 What he was dreaming of. It came at last.
 "Some day some fellow will. I'd only like
 To be alive then! That would be a trick
 To dream of — and to live for! What we know
 Of time and light and space will lead us surely
 Skyward. . . . Then, beyond death. What are your
 words,

Your pantomimes of life, your pictured thoughts,
 Compared to this, — the very exaltation
 Springing from one true mathematic sign
 That links a planet with her sister moon
 And with ten trillion trillion worlds that crash,
 Serenely noiseless in abandoned space,
 To those god-ridden intervals of time
 Which chain them to each other; or that can
 In turn, reveal the symmetry of things
 Incredibly removed from human eyes
 And find them one with all? . . . " He broke off
 there,

And added quietly, "Don't you glow to think
 The very energy with which you boil
 A pint of water — body of the sun —
 Inalienably his? Where is your poetry,

Your beauty out of little balancings,
Compared to this! Why, even comradeship
Grows feeble in a man who knows the deep,
Unerring fellowship of worlds and stars!"

"Perhaps it does — " She pondered broodingly
On what he'd said, almost as though she feared
Her own small, warring universe within
Had been set going to a measured beat
Not integrally hers. And had she stopped
With that, there might not have been more
To sear and wound — or maybe just for not
That day at least — . She couldn't have been sure.
But, whether it is fate or just the chance
Folks drive themselves to, since they cannot help
But be themselves — and so make destiny —
Some force impelled her to reply to him:
"Suns can be cold compared to man's brief joy —
And his great pain!"

He answered musingly —
"Our small unhappiness! Yesterday
I buried the small bunny, used to come
And sit and beg and make the baby laugh." —
She looked up quickly. "Do not think," he said,
"I didn't realize! The little fellow
Wept bitterly and that was quite enough!
But in the end he took it more as all
Wild helpless things take every natural act.
Though he comes back each day with 'Bunny — *gone!*'
He's grown around his pain — and there's a reason."

She shook her head. "We'll never know it then —."

"I'm not so sure," he answered her, "so sure
That some day we won't understand it all,—
Yes, even death — and all because a few
Delved deep behind the surface for the truth!"

"It isn't found in facts," she said.

“And there
You go again,” — he caught her up more sharply —
“Making a statement you can never back
By any precept dreamed of!”

“Oh the truth
Goes deeper than a precept, deeper far
Than the discrepant findings men have made!”

“These are all we’ve ever had to live by.”

She stopped him with a sudden exclamation.
“Oh, you are getting all too far afield
For your own happiness and all of ours!
Life, with its bounding limitations here,
Is what we have to deal with. How I’ve longed
For my sake and your own to live it full
Beyond the hill’s brim, where we’ve been allowed
To wander, — longed to take full-palmed the joy, —
The little time that’s fallen ours — !”

“And I say
That you can take it just as surely here
And see as far as though you covered thrice
Ten thousand times the helpless, trivial sphere
We live upon!”

“And be as happy?”

“*Happy!*”

As to that, what does it signify?”

“I thought
That it was still significant to *you*.”

He could not doubt her meaning, but he took
It in its too divided sense. He said;
“Your happiness? Well, if it isn’t plain
After these years that it has been
Almost my only thought — ” He waited here
For she was slow to answer.

“Yes, it has been.
Dear, *your* way of giving happiness — the kind
You understand the best — oh, can’t you see
It might not have been mine — nor marked the goal
I live for?”

Not a shadow crossed his face;
Only — “Then let’s not say it now,” he urged;
And there was misery in his deep voice.

She nodded. But unwillingly her thought
Drove round about her speech, until it pounced
Again on unspent longing. “We shall think
Of other things today,” she told him. “When
I get to dreaming in these lonely woods
I seem to see myself — and know that one
Can’t plant an olive on a shivery bluff
With firs and elms and make it grow
According to its secretive design.
Yet grow it must — or frustrate all attempt.”

“And few have been so lucky,” was the sum
Of all he answered her.

“But here,” she urged
It could be all so easily arranged.”

He broke forth then, for this was tender ground
With them, — “*Easily?*”

“If you so wished it, dear —
Forgive me, for it’s what I most believe!”
For she was sorry she had gone so far.

But he was now intent: “*Easy* to throw
A burden by ourselves besought, on those
Who could but hate it more, not being theirs?”
And added, when she did not look at him:
“No, I have got to make a go of this —
My fault perhaps — but not as yet my crime.

When all is done, we'll go where you may wish
According as we can."

"Time is so dear!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Does it," he inquired
"Matter so very much where one or two
Live out their lives — or how? . . . The other day
I put the baby's bunny underground;
The next perhaps some long encumbered sun
Flings a new world in space." . . . His eyes sought
hers

Half edged with dreaming. "After all," he said,
"You've had to bear the brunt, and you shall say."

"After *them*, I come!"

Under level brows

His eyes searched hers: "Your sense of balance, dear, —
Hold to it, and the facts, however harsh.
Our leaving now would throw the others out."

"The others! Facts! And what strange precedence
Should these things take before your life and mine?"

"I thought," he said, "that it took absolute."

The evening chilled between them, while her lips
Trembled a little as she answered him
With something of a stubbornness unlike
The usual quick warmth of her tone:
"Not while we're needing — while — "

He cut her short.

"You don't yet know," he said, "the first of what
Folks suffer! But not to whine — but to be brave
In trouble is a thing I most admired
In you — "

She stopped him with a sound
Inside her like the drowning of a sob.

"Not that!" he begged, "Tears are an easy way —
To solve — "

“You can be cruel!” she said, and he:
“Ah God, if we’d not started — *footlessly!*”
She caught and held her breath then. “What,” she asked
Have we besides — ?” But paused, for he had gone
To stand before the doorway looking out
To where the evening smouldered on the hills,
His shoulders cut in black against the gray;
Then, without backward glance, and with his arms
Set sidewise as a man who walks between
Two narrow, dusty walls, he slipped outside.
And silence, worse than any words, went with him
And set its painful seal upon her lips.
Within her and without her burned anew
An agony of bitterness. She stared
Unseeingly, while questions like swift knives
Juggled this way and that. Could words alone
Brew pain? Or would unspoken thoughts, at length,
Remain there to destroy them just the same?
Still she sat darkly, watching him move on,
Like the slow-moving years she knew so well,
Tall, stooping, with a pain-enforced limp,
Too old for the young shoulders and the grave
Beauty of his remembered face. And she thought
How love, that came, unaugured, like a flash
Of sunlight on a mirror, took, in turn,
Its own, slow agony of years — to go.
For a long moment there was horrid joy
In proving this more true. And still she glimpsed,
Passing from path to ridge, from ridge to woods,
A shadowy figure, till it slipped among
The ghostly birches and became at once
As moveless and insensible as these.
Her hands were silent; only thought was rife
Of the long night to come Clear drops of brass
Swung thickly into space and hung there low,
Studding the darkness . . . He’d come back, she knew,
But when — and how? And would they speak before

A rigid round of common duties laid
Its burden on their lips? She saw too well
What might become an emptiness of choice
For both of them . . . He would come back
Slowly at last. He would not leave her there,
For she was fearful — would he look at her?
Or should she be the first to speak and mend
For a renewed uncertainty — ? The word
Echoed within the dungeons of her thought
And brought a well of tears to overcast
Her once bright cheeks. Oh, was it so the way
Looked to them, when, just seven years ago,
They'd pledged her love against his disillusion
And fought him back to life?

She stanch'd them back,

Sitting in darkness where they needn't show
And so might be forgiven. Oh, for long
She waited, while the now unshadowed night
Stretched its black carpet from her opened doors.
Once she rose blindly, rearranged a quilt
Over a sleeping child and slid a head
Back to its pillowed sleep. Once, when an owl
Furred brazen wings too close, she started. Once
A brief wind stirred the withered brushes, whence
Autumn had stripped the leaves, and whimpered back
Into the woods. She shivered, wondering now
How far he'd gone, fearing for them and him,
And for that heavy, blundering heart of hers
That could not but seek pain or else refute
The best it had to give! Once, springing up,
A sudden terror touched her at the low,
Sharp snapping of an isolated twig.
But nothing followed and she went and stood
Beside the lifeless fireplace, gazing down . . .

And then his figure stood against the night
And his low music broke about her heart,
Distinctly strange. "It's only me," he said,

Feeling her nervousness, "come back."
She looked up at the voice, then turned and dropped
Limply into a seat; but not before
He'd sensed the rhythmic swell of despair
That mastered her.

Slowly he crossed the floor
And stood beside her. Like a rock her heart
Turned sharp against her side.

He took her hand
And held it warmly in the two of his,
Held it without a word against his cheek,
Until at length — "I didn't know — " she said.
He stopped her with a pressure of his arm.
"It showed me how impossible one day
Would be away. . . . Beyond the hill —
I guess that is as far as I could get."
He said it whimsically as of old
And naturally, she thought, with that strange love
Of what are old familiar ways to those
Who for an instant think they're losing them.
She could not answer; but, as a low wave
Lies up against the shore and then sinks back,
So gently did her spirit slide to his,
And, through him, to the night. . . .

Above a fir
One star stood brighter than its neighbors; all
Would fade, she knew, while it was still aloft
Pallid but definite against the dawn. —
What was it then? What this strange room, this box
Where reaching figures clung and hoped and waited,
With just themselves to save them at the end
From all this fear, this struggle and this beauty?
So both their thoughts flew outward, as they clung
Together. . . .

Vague, without a sign, unmarked
Against the silvery blackness here and there,
A star went out — it might be it was blown
By the still wings of time, for all it gave a sign
Of any struggle. Another and another
Dropped to remoteness, shimmered and was gone.
And he was breathing now, as a child breathes
In summer sleep. But still she watched,
Breathless with wonder as they fell away,
Until the heaven's floor lay bare of all
But one. Through a torn branch it shone at her
Without a twinkle, definitely light,
Lovelier for its pale solitariness;
And those white, island cliffs of light, she knew,
Only the surfs of dawn could quite obscure.

THE FLYLEAF IN THE BOOK OF DISILLUSION

By GRACE STONE COATES

We had trees.

We had orchards, but we had trees besides.

Every one had orchards — peach and cherry orchards, and sometimes long plum rows. Plums were vaguely undesirable. We didn't have any. We were the norm. Grape arbors were wonderful, like things in books. We had none, but we would have, some day.

Father sneered at people who had things we didn't. Mother never sneered. She loved people in spite of herself as soon as she was sorry for them, and she was sorry for them as soon as they began to talk to her. But even mother's tone was delicately final when she said, "We do not care for . . . " Yes, plums were *declass  *, especially wild plums.

We had trees — cottonwoods, tall mother-cottonwoods; and osage oranges — not hedges such as shiftless people

used instead of barbed wire fences, but single trees pruned high, with big trunks. There were five box-elders — three men and one woman-tree that were always strangers, like persons one passed in town without speaking, and one big father box-elder in whose branches I spent long hours. Two *Ailanthus* trees stood outside the pantry window. These were not like real trees. They belonged to the dark strange things that meant something other than themselves. They were father's trees. Mother, who loved everything, hated them. She never looked at them, never spoke of them, yet I knew she hated them. I wondered if they were part Negro.

The cottonwoods stood on the north side of the lane running west to the house. There were red cottonwoods and yellow cottonwoods. They were tall. They were the tallest things in the world. They were taller than the windmill, which was over a thousand feet. I knew about the windmill. I had asked father — he was planing red cedar posts for the windmill's legs — if thirty feet was more than a thousand. He chuckled and said, "Yes, thirty feet more. One is a fact and the other is an exaggeration." What he said made little shadows of what he meant on my mind, and we both laughed. The cottonwoods were so tall they hardly noticed the windmill after it was once built.

Early in the spring — early, before I had begun to ask, "How long is it until my birthday?" and my mother to answer, "Three months, now" — the cottonwoods would begin to look important. They would sway a little, and glance at each other; or they would stand very still and wait. They were not uneasy. They were not uneasy, because they were old and understood everything; but they were waiting, and their highest tips were beginning to swell.

Then came days when the hens' summons was indolent and compelling; days when they sauntered around talking to themselves, or threw showers of rich earth as they

ruffled themselves into the side of a sunny bank. Men were plowing, and I was never in the house; mother's admonition, "Don't go without your sun-bonnet!" just missed me around the corner. Suddenly summer was droning everywhere, and the cottonwoods were wattled in red and yellow.

The catkins hung on the highest branches, festooned and lovely, mysterious colored lace against the sky. The nearest branches of the trees were inaccessible above my head; above my brother's head, so that the lane cottonwoods were never climbed. On these lower branches, also, catkins hung. They were coarser and indefinitely different from those above. Besides, they fell off and lay thick on the ground, and were quite rough and ugly with knobby green lumps near the stem. We walked on them under the trees, and even made a game of stepping on them. I was ashamed, afterward, and picked up the bruised catkins to bury them in shallow graves, and tried to make my feet stop thinking about them.

In the topmost branches hung the delicate panicles for which I ached. I could not tell when they were hardest to bear, when they swung gently in a soft wind, as if they were standing on tip-toe to look beyond the horizon, or when they hung motionless, meaning something I could not understand. Motionless they frightened me, so that I ran away and hid in the hay loft, or flung myself against the stubborn trunks in a vain attempt to make the branches stir. Dancing, they excited me beyond reason.

One day, a thousand years long, when the sunshine ran its fingers over my face if I closed my eyes, our parents had gone to town. We three children were left behind with the usual injunctions to do this and do that, and refrain from the other. In the afternoon we were together in the yard. We were almost never out of doors together. Teresa usually stayed in the house and peeled potatoes, or stood on a chair so she could reach to wash dishes; and Carl ran after the hired men. When Teresa and Carl

did play, they had a game they called Being Enchanted. They would tell me to close my eyes and count ten, and when I opened them Carl and Teresa were enchanted so I couldn't see them. They were right by my side where they had been, they said, and could see every thing I did, but they couldn't speak and couldn't be seen. They had played the game all the morning. It bothered me a little, and made me feel queer, because I was afraid they were looking at what I was thinking. I looked at things around me and tried not to think. They were tired of being enchanted and had come into sight from behind me. Carl discovered that I wanted a cottonwood blossom. I pointed out the very one. Teresa prudently reminded him that we were forbidden to climb trees when our parents were away. Carl remembered that the last thing mother had said was for them to take good care of Veve, and how could they take good care of her, he argued, unless they got her a cottonwood blossom when she wanted it?

Teresa was sufficiently reassured to brace her stocky shoulders against the tallest tree, and help Carl climb till he could clutch the lowest branch. After that her advice alternated between telling him he was a fool to risk breaking his neck to humor a baby, and encouraging him if he showed signs of turning back.

He climbed. He climbed. He passed the broad crotches and the lighter upper branches. At last he stood in the highest notch he dared attempt, and stretched out his hand.

I looked away while he picked the catkin.

Teresa and he were standing in front of me, pressing into my palms the fairy tassels. At first I thought they were playing a joke on me, but in an instant I knew! I *knew*, irrevocably, and burst into tears, silent flooding tears that came easily and left my spirit clean. The two plied me with questions. Wasn't it the blossom I wanted? Did I want more? Did I want a yellow one? Did I want

red ones? All I could do was to shake my head, No, No, and whisper, "Go away!"

Teresa stamped her foot and appealed to space to know if I were not a most "pervoking child". (I was secretly grateful to her that she seldom took tears seriously.) Carl was troubled. He did not know me well. Finally Teresa declared, "We'll ask her just once more what's the matter, and if she wont tell we'll run away and hide!"

She leaned over me and shook my arm, demanding, "What are you crying for?"

Humor broke through my tears. I could taste their salty trickle at the corners of my smile as I proffered that ultimate outrage: "I was crying for fun!"

"Then let's run away from her," snorted my sister, and two pairs of legs, swifter than mine, were around the house and out of sight.

But I knew why I had cried, though words to tell it were not mine. I had opened the great book of disillusion, and from the flyleaf deduced the entire volume. I knew, once and for all, that fairy things against the sky are those that fall humdrum, to be trampled under foot.

THEOLOGY

By JAMES HEARST

When we were boys, a man my father hired
Solemnly swore to us in broad daylight
He feared not God nor devils; later our grove
Frightened him half to death one windy night.

He heard a tree go down, he felt the wind;
But God or devils, who's seen one of these? —
Until we learned he'd never been to church
We thought he lied for not excepting trees.

BRIEF REVIEWS

Angel. By DuBOSE HEYWARD. (Doran, \$2.00.) Dubose Heyward's second novel disappointed me keenly. There is in it little of the fine modulation of *Porgy*, neither the exuberance nor the depression. In characterization there is a great gap between the highly original and individual, unforgettable Negroes of the earlier book, and the largely typical and conventional figures in *Angel*. A few chapters have the quality which I hoped for, but there is too much mediocre and some bad writing in this book. I am sorry that I cannot like it, for I enjoyed and admired *Porgy*, as I do Mr. Heyward's poems. I feel sure that the creator of *Porgy* will give us much better novels than *Angel*.

J. T. F.

The Sun Also Rises. By ERNEST HEMINGWAY. (Scribner, \$2.00.) The hot color and dusty light of Spain fill the most impressive pages of this book. The thing as a whole is a wilful patterning of glimpses, people and places touched lightly, with a seeming casualness. But to me the book seems to go deep, to a certain rather terrifying grasp of character and to a profound comprehension of a contemporary attitude of mind. The noisy and unavailing lives of the people in its pages seem to possess a meaning beyond that which the people themselves recognize, and beyond anything to which the writer gives more than tacit assent. I believe that this book is worth pondering.

J. T. F.

BIOGRAPHICAL

The home of GRACE STONE COATES is at Martinsdale, Montana. ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY, of San Francisco, will be remembered for his "The Late Joseph West," published in the MIDLAND for August, 1924, and other stories.

JAMES HEARST's home is in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

HARRIET MAXON THAYER's home is in Milwaukee. Her work in former numbers of the MIDLAND will be recalled by our readers.

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FRANK LUTHER MOTT.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 25th day of April, 1927.

GLENN R. GRIFFITH,
Notary Public.

